Controls

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HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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SARVODAYA AND OTHER ISMS

[Notes of a talk with Gandhiji]

Wardha, 22-8-'34

I joined Bapu in his constitutional at six o'clock this morning. He gave directions regarding the Harijan Ashram Trust. Then the talk turned to village service. He had recently suggested that such work should not be done under the aegis of an organization. Referring to it Bapu said that there would have been little need for Kishorlal's lengthy commentary, if what he (Gandhiji) meant by absence of organization had been properly understood. "It certainly does not mean that there should be no connection or co-operation among the workers. Not only so, we even contemplate to maintain workers from a common fund for some time. So, my advice of unorganized service only means that a village worker should not receive or expect orders or instructions from a higher authority about the way in which he should set about his village work, but must be free to settle his own programme and the manner of fulfilling it. He will also prove his usefulness to the village so that by and by the village should be willing to provide him with a living. If the village fails to do so, he should take to some labour or a handicraft and earn his livelihood. If he knows no other handicraft, he can at least take to carding and spinning for eight hours a day. I hold that whoever devotes eight hours daily to any socially useful productive work is entitled to get a living. My ideal of socialism is that everyone should get the same wage. A lawyer, a physician, a teacher, a labourer or a sweeper — all should get equal wages. Today not only wages are not equal but there is difference of heaven and earth between the highest and the lowest incomes. At present, the condition is that while a lawyer might get a thousand rupees a day, a sweeper might not get even eight annas."

Thus from village work Bapu switched on to socialism. I said that I understood that in Russia the Communist Party followed the same principle. All members of that party took the same allowance whatever be the nature of their work. Bapu said that both Rama and Ravana had to go through nearly the same kind of discipline and austerities. Thereupon I narrated the kind of iron discipline that was imposed on a member of the Communist Party and described how he was punished for even a small fault, or if it be a serious lapse, even expelled from the party, and also their method of self-criticism by each member. Bapu said that he was very anxious to know more about it, but, added that he got no time for reading. His interest and enthusiasm for reading had not abated in the least. When he saw books he did not know which he should select because he wanted to read everyone of them. But under the call of duty he had to control his desire for reading books. "Shall I read, I said to myself, all these books or shall I read first what Mahadev has just written on the *Gita?* And I decided that my duty was to go through Mahadev's manuscript. He wrote it at my suggestion. Therefore, I have taken that up for reading since yesterday."

As the talk proceeded, I suggested that Bapu should express his views on the problem of rural indebtedness and how it could be liquidated; also, if the rich were to be regarded as trustees of their wealth, he should define the duties and obligations of the rich as trustees. Bapu said that these things would be accomplishable easily when the common people got control over Government. Sooner or later that control was bound to come. It was in the atmosphere, and it was their right, and therefore it could not but come. But it was possible that even when they got the control, the common people might not understand politics. Nevertheless, it would be they who would select their leaders. "At that time the leadership will come either to us or go to the socialists. Those who will have served the people sincerely will become their leaders. While we believe in the principle that we can control only the means, the end or result is not in our hands, the socialists look to the end, and are prepared to adopt any means to achieve it. But, if we shall fully preserve the purity of our means, I have no doubt that the leadership over the masses will remain with us; the socialists will not succeed. If they get the power, they will resort to confiscation of property, repudiation of debts and similar extreme methods. But if we keep proper control over the means, power will never go to the socialists. At present, they will not be able to achieve anything beyond startling the propertied class by their unrestrained language. I do not want just to startle them, I want to reform them. That was the reason for my getting the Working Committee to clarify its policy at its last meeting. For myself, I would laugh at the socialists' talks. If we are vigilant and honest, they can never succeed in our country.

"So far what we have done is so very trivial indeed and yet we have been able to bring about some change in people like . . . Though to a very insignificant extent, they have begun to act as trustees. It is true that the amount of commissions which they take as trustees is on a royal scale, but by and by we shall succeed in getting that also reduced. . . . has converted himself into a true trustee, and when the control of the Government passes into the hands of the masses, all of them (capitalists) will quickly accept their obligations, and will be willing to carry out the duties assigned to them. But if we needlessly startle them today, they will just organize themselves and establish fascism in our country. Even in suspending the present civil disobedience movement, I have checked the advent of fascism in our country. In a way fascism does exist in our country even today, but so far not many of the rich have joined it. Those who have understood that I am their friend do not join any such organization. How can they organize against me?

"It is not that people would necessarily be unhappy under fascism. We may leave aside Hitler, but under Mussolini Italy is certainly better off than before. Some of the public utility works undertaken there are commendable. The standard of living has improved. But what does it all avail? There is no freedom there. Whoever dares to oppose Mussolini's policy invites death. And now even killing has become unnecessary. People have adapted themselves to the new condition and are content with it. He has done the work more cleverly than Hitler. His personal life is extremely simple. But he has the eyes of a cat. A person gets dazed in his presence. I was not to be dazed like that but I noticed that he had so arranged things about him that a visitor would easily get striken with terror. The walls of the passage, through which one has to pass to reach him, are all overstudded with various types of swords and other weapons. In his own room too, there is not a single picture or anything of that kind on the walls but they are all covered with weapons. He keeps no arms on his person. But his eyes move about in every direction as if in constant rotation. The visitor would totally succumb before the awe of his gaze like a rat running directly into the mouth of a cat out of mere fright. What is happening in our own country in Bengal today? Anderson says that he is taking the mildest possible steps to check the terrorist activity there. But even these steps might be oppressive enough. Yet people may grow insensible to oppression when it is not quite visible, and the people in Bengal seem to have got used to the high-handed rule going on there today. Darjeeling was once a resort of the Bengalis. Englishmen had almost left it. But today no Bengali can even enter Darjeeling without a passport. This is not a desirable condition of existence even if people are economically well off. There is danger of this type of fascism getting established in India, and I want to save the country from it by winning the rich over and making them our friends.

"So, in our efforts, we must strictly guard the means of attaining control over the masses. These must always be pure. If at the time people obtain control over government, the leadership is in our hands, there will be no difficulty in settling the problem of rural indebtedness.

"The moneyed-class will readily accept the position of trustees. If we do not waste our wealth and energy, the climate and the natural resources of our country are such that we can become the happiest people in the world."

(*Translated from the original in Gujarati*)

N. P.

EARTH HOUSES—I

Earth has been used as building material since the very beginning of human civilization. Entire empires had their architecture based exclusively on earth as the sole structural material. The ancient civilizations of China, North India, Peru, Mexico, north coast of Africa and Minor Asia have known no other structural material and have built their homes, palaces and forts in earth only.

Among the various types of houses made in earth, houses made out of earth rammed in wooden moulds to form walls deserve special attention because of their strength and capacity to last for centuries. Already in the times of Pliny, the Roman historian, forts were known many centuries old. The rammed earth method of building was considered so important that Pliny took the pain to describe it in great details. The rammed wall was extensively used by the Romans throughout their empire. From the Gauls they have learned to mix earth with natural asphalt for added toughness. They have also been using a kind of natural cement, made out of powdered lava, which was poured as a slurry over rubble piled up between planks. This powdered lava was also added to rammed earth. Hannibal has built in Spain forts out of rammed earth, which have outlived by many centuries the empire of their builders.

Several portions of the Great Wall of China were built in rammed earth. Poles were driven in the ground in two parallel rows and earth was rammed between them. When the space between the poles was full, they were pulled out and re-erected further on.

Curiously enough the Bhil tribes in C. P. build their huts in a similar way. They erect a sort of double basketwork by weaving twigs about sticks stuck in the ground in two rows and fill the space between with earth, ramming it down with poles. On the walls so erected they fix their thatched roof and finish the walls by smearing them with mud.

The ancient Indian forts were built on the same principle. The space between two stone walls was filled with rammed earth. Sometimes eggs were added or buttermilk with lime or brown sugar. The English guns were not able to dent the tough

old mud of the Bharatpur Fort. In many cases the outer stone wall has crumbled away, while the mud core stands bare and good for centuries more.

The present great demand for housing coupled with shortage of raw materials has given fresh impetus to the study of earth as structural material. Research is going on in several parts of the world, especially in U. S. A. and sufficient progress was made to give back to earth the position of man's most important building material.

In India the problem was tackled by the Village Industries Research Laboratory with the help of the Government of Mysore. The workers have started with the very obvious fact that in India no other material but earth is available in sufficient quantity to cope with the demand for housing in cities and in villages. Earth was inevitable and therefore earth had to be studied.

India is short of fuel. If the kitchen fireplace is not given all the firewood it needs, manure will be burned. With the destruction of manure, food will run short. Burnt bricks and lime are luxuries. The research has gone in the direction of raw earth.

There are many ways of using raw earth for building. Puddled mud, wattles and mud, mud bricks sun-dried, adobe bricks, stabilized adobe bricks, rammed earth, rammed earth blocks, pressed bricks, pressed bricks stabilized, rock hard pressed bricks, sprayed mud etc. — these are the various ways of building out of earth. They will be described one by one in short articles, aiming solely at bringing the subject to the notice of the public, both general and professional.

Bombay, 11-10-'48 MAURICE FRYDMAN

NOTES

Charkha Jayanti Reports

Every year the Charkha Jayanti is observed in several parts of the country in a variety of ways, and for periods varying from a few days to about three months. At some places it is observed in a strikingly novel manner. The *Harijan* office receives reports of the work done from not a few places. But having regard to the size of the papers it is impossible to take a casual note of more than one or two out of several.

I suggest that the head office of each Provincial Charkha Organization should invite such reports in proper forms and prepare a properly studied summary of the work done throughout the province, and publish it locally; and from all such provincial reports the all India Charkha Sangh could prepare a readable report for the information of the general public.

It would be possible then for the *Harijan* papers to share in the publication of such digests.

Harijan Work

The above remarks apply also to the celebration of the Harijan Week or organized Harijan work, with appropriate changes.

Bombay, 11-10-'48 K. G. M.

LIFE IN MUSSOORIE

Addressing a post-prayer meeting at Mussoorie, Shri Vinoba said:

There was a time, when men visited peaks of holy mountains to get an inspiration for asceticism, and for attainment of knowledge through the practice of meditation. But it was no longer so. The peaks had become places of luxury and self-indulgence. In spite of that Shri Vinoba hoped that those who visited them would be touched with some pious sentiments.

Dignity of Man

The first thing that he saw on his arrival at Mussoorie, Shri Vinoba said, was the rickshaw. Man had a sense of dignity; and this was lost when he was thus employed. One could understand the case of those who were either indisposed or crippled. But there, in Mussoorie, the rickshaw had come to stay as a common vehicle. He himself had been offered a rickshaw when he started for the prayers. That only showed how blunt their sensibility had become. The feeling of fellowship had been crippled. He was aware that the custom was not limited to Mussoorie but had spread to several big cities. But it required to be abandoned.

Shesh-Nag

The life at Mussoorie, continued Shri Vinoba, was entirely dependent on labourers. Like the *Sheshnag*, who supported the earth, these humble friends supported and carried the burden of those who resided in Mussoorie. He could see that the heavy luggage which the labourer carried on his back curved his spine. It would result in the speedy destruction of his life. He might, while young, be able to perform that sort of work, but it would break him down very quickly.

Scavengers' Plight

He also witnessed that the street-sweeper had to mop the street with a tiny broom. He could do his work only with his back bent at a right angle to his legs. As Shri Vinoba had experience of that kind of work, he knew what it meant to remain bent for a long time. Referring to the scavengers, Shri Vinoba said that they daily cleaned the commodes more than once in many houses. In spite of such obliging service rendered by them, they were regarded as untouchables and low. But who could be lower than those who considered their benefactors low?

Concluding Shri Vinoba said that he did not say these things to find fault with anybody. He was, as it were, speaking to himself, and desired that they should think over the matter and make proper reforms.

Mussoorie, 26-9-'48 D. M.

(*Translated from the original in Hindustani*)

KEY TO HEALTH

By M. K. Gandhi

Translated by Dr. Sushila Nayyar

Price *Rs. 0-10-0* Postage *0-2-0*

Gandhiji says in the introduction about his book:

"I am giving a new name: *Key to Health.* Anyone who observes the rules of health mentioned in this book will find that he has got in it a real key to unlock the gates leading him to health. He will not need to knock at the doors of doctors or *vaidyas* from day to day."

HARIJAN

October 24 1948

CONTROLS

Shri Santbal is a Jain *sadhu*, who has devoted himself to constructive activities among the backward classes of the Ahmedabad District for several years past. In the course of a circular letter to the workers of Gujarat he writes:

"It appears that controls are about to be reimposed to fight the problem of inflation and high prices. The previous experience of controls has shown to us that the moral degradation of the people caused by the controls is extremely great.

"The strenuous efforts of Gandhiji led to their removal. But the expected happy results did not follow. Then floods in some parts and famine in others have further complicated the food problem. In the case of cloth, merchants did not act honestly. Hence, control has been reimposed upon cloth. Food is likely to be controlled next. Thus we shall return to the old conditions.

"For us (village workers), the fundamental question is that of the cultivator. Before imposing control on food, that question should be seriously considered. If the control appears inevitable, it should be brought in such a way as to induce the cultivator to co-operate with it.

"The following two alternatives are possible:

"(1) Government should entrust the entire management to a body of constructive workers and give it their full co-operation; that is to say, they should provide the body with whatever food it imports into the province from outside, and also distribute cloth, iron and other basic necessities of the cultivator through this body. If cultivators are enabled to purchase their wants at fixed prices, it will be possible to induce them to sell their grains also at a fixed price. Since Government would be giving their full co-operation in the management, the working would be smooth.

"(2) Another way would be to convene agriculturists' conferences in every district, and have them appoint their representative bodies. The prices of food should be fixed in consultation with such representatives. The cultivator will thereby feel that the prices have been fixed by his men. Moreover, it will enable the authorities to understand the real difficulties of the cultivator in the administration of controls. In this way, too, it will be possible to develop a healthy public opinion.

"Personally, I think that it is not good to return to the once abolished controls. We must try our utmost to avoid them. By avoiding, I do not mean in an indirect manner, but by persuading the ministers to our views. And, if it appears that they are unavoidable, it is necessary that they should be in a way which will be supported by public opinion. We might hope to avoid the undesirable consequences of controls, if at least there is public opinion behind them.

"I request you to give your opinion in this object."

I agree with the opinion about controls expressed above. So far as I have been able to gather, the constructive workers of Gujarat are generally of the same mind. Their opinion is based on their actual experience.

I have often said that neither control nor decontrol can bring comfort to a people, which has become heavily morally degraded.

Shri Santbal has suggested two alternatives. I think that the first is better and safer. The scope of elected representative committees has a limit. It is a mistake to extend the method of elections in activities requiring simple honest administration, when the general moral level of the people has gone low. You cannot draw more or better water than what is stored in the reservoir.

Another good alternative is to organize co-operative societies, and carry out the work through them. A co-operative society would be a people's organization in the fullest sense.

Where this too is not possible, it would be better for the Government to carry out the work directly through its own staff. Electors hardly have any control over their representatives after the elections are over; and if the work is not well done, the Government is enabled to point to the representatives and deny its own responsibility for mismanagement. This leads to irresponsibility. And the most important condition for the good execution of any work is that it should be entrusted to people who feel a sense of personal responsibility in the matter. Indeed, it is on this, that capitalism has claimed its right of existence.

Bombay, 9-10-'48 K. G. MASHRUWALA

THE W. H. O. CONFERENCE

[I had requested the Honourable Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Minister for Health, New Delhi, to give me a brief account of her visit to Europe in July last to participate in the World Health Organization (WHO) Conference. She has responded to my request and I trust the readers of the *Harijan* will be interested in sharing her following letter with me.

I would request the reader not to feel angry at or annoyed with Pakistan for her attitude. As I stated in my article on Qaid-i-Azam Jinnah, every act of Pakistan explains itself if we once understand that her present goal is to run away from everything that would bring her in touch with Hindus and Hinduism. If we adhere faithfully to the ideal of *sarvodaya* placed before us by Gandhiji, and shed our own communalism, irrespective of how Pakistan responds to it immediately, a time must come when the clouds of mistrust will scatter themselves away, and the relations between the two Dominions will be as they should be among cultured children of the same mother. Let us never forget that no matter how many autonomous political States there be in India, all India is one. Pakistan is not different from Nepal, or Goa or Pondicherry to the land surveyed by Mt. Gaurishankar,

and the culture of the Brahmaputra, the Ganges and the Indus valleys will never fail to show its fundamentally common origin.

Bombay, 1-10-'48 — K. G. M.]

The WHO (World Health Organization) is one of the beneficient activities which the Social and Economic Council of UNO (United Nations Organization) has brought into being. War is a curse and brings nothing but calamity in its wake. And yet it is strange that man still resorts to this brutality for the solution of problems. In any event the poverty, disease and hunger which followed in the wake of the last world war had to be dealt with and such organizations as F. A. O., U. N. E. S. C. O., and W. H. O. undertook the task of rehabilitating the vast mass of humanity in the war-devastated areas. This undertaking has now extended its scope to all countries of the world. This is as it should be, for no part of the world is left untouched by a global war. The East, backward as it is in the matter of education and health and now suffering from acute food shortage also, stands no less in need of such rehabilitation than the war-devastated areas of Europe. China has of course been helped largely from the very beginning. Her plight is worse than any other country because she has been in the throes of war for longer than the others and civil war still continues to rend her in twain.

International Conferences are always interesting. Apart from the knowledge gained of conditions in other countries of the world and of how they are tackling their problems, apart from the valuable experience of working in Commissions which these Conferences offer, it is good to make personal contacts with men and women from different parts of the globe. Today English may be said to be the lingua franca of the world and it is not, therefore, difficult for us to get to know people. But, of course, knowledge of French, Spanish and Russian would be very valuable for our delegates.

This was the third occasion on which I had the privilege of attending an International Conference on behalf of our country. I found a definite change in the attitude of everyone towards us now that we are independent. There is immense interest in us and in our problems and sympathy too. We had universal sorrow expressed at the passing away of Gandhiji. They wanted to know everything about him in detail. While they could not subscribe to his ideology simply because they felt it was not practical for mere human beings, I do not think there was any questioning as to the moral rightness of the way of life advocated by him. One man from a country that had suffered terribly in the last world war said, "How I wish he could have been with us to show us how to battle non-violently! We were physically and numerically weaker and we had to surrender but if we could have known how and had been led by a Gandhi to resist without arms, I am sure we would have had the courage to do so."

They just could not understand how one of us had been foolish enough to kill him. There is no doubt that our international reputation is high because of the spiritual giant God gave us and if we are to maintain it we must remain true to Gandhiji.

The WHO Conference was composed mostly of doctors who were working in the field of public health in their respective countries. They were all personally anxious to join hands in arresting the progress of disease and the spread of epidemics and all felt that it should be through agencies like those of health and education that better understanding among nations might be born. The inhabitants of all the countries who have been through war do not want to face its horrors again. And yet, even at non-political conferences, a certain amount of politics and all the fear complexes and jealousies and bitterness that politics unhappily breed do creep in and sometimes mar the smooth running of the work.

The proposal of regionalization met with a certain amount of opposition. India was the main sponsor of the scheme and our view-point was upheld by a large majority in the end, with the result that we are to have the headquarters for the South East Asia Zone in our country. We have decided to have this in Mysore and hope to begin our work there early next year. Burma, Ceylon, Siam and Afghanistan have joined our group and we hope Malaya will also come in and Nepal too if she decides to become a member State of UNO. Pakistan, with their mistrust of us and in spite of advice by other countries to the contrary, elected to join the Middle East Zone which will have its headquarters bureau in Alexandria. It is tragic that in spite of goodwill from our side they refuse to co-operate even in matters of health which should transcend all barriers of creed or race. If our Bureau in Mysore can make even one village a model of good health we shall be doing a great service. Proper housing, proper sanitation, proper water supply, the best nutrition within the bounds of possibility in the area concerned, the elemination of water and insect-borne diseases, the provision of medical aid in the shape of maternal and child welfare centres and dispensaries and, above all, health education for the prevention of diseases are all matters requiring urgent attention. Such work offers a wide field of research too.

There was plenty of good will in the U. K. also for India. One was greeted in the same spirit by most people. "So glad you are free. Sorry about Gandhi."

This worship of one who was supposed to be an inveterate foe of Britain at one time as also an indefatigable opponent of the way of life of the West is quite remarkable. It just shows that the heart of man is sound, that instinctively he yearns for peace and that the things of the spirit do really find first place within his innermost recesses. I often wondered whether these people who had

never seen him in the flesh were not really nearer to him than many of us who, in spite of his long years of ministry in our own land, have spurned his teaching. And the thought brings home the responsibility that lies on those of us who do believe in what he taught us.

England is still in the throes of an economic breakdown. Life is hard even though it may be said to be a little less hard than when I was last there in 1946. One has to stand in queues for most things. Food and clothing and fuel are strictly rationed. But the spirit and discipline of the people are most commendable. The individual is willing to suffer without complaint for the sake of the larger good. There is no shouting nor scramble for places in queues. The law of 'first come, first served' is strictly adhered to with the utmost discipline. And since one has to form up for queues for most things, e. g. for seats in restaurants, cinemas, theatres, buses, trams, railways, shops and even for buying newspapers, such behaviour calls for the utmost restraint. Pedestrians and motor or bus or horse-carriage drivers or cyclists are so strict about obeying traffic directions that one rarely if ever hears the hoot of a motor horn in London. I wish our people could learn to execute their business without noise and in an orderly manner. There is much that we can learn from the U. K. and other Western countries in the matter of disciplined behaviour both at home and collectively in public.

One rarely sees a drunken person in London. Alcohol is very expensive and that puts it out of the reach of the majority of persons. Moreover no drink is served after 10 p. m. or even earlier in some places. I wish we could have some such regulations brought in here immediately as well as put prohibitive prices on alcoholic drinks so as to make it easier for people to adjust themselves to prohibition when we are able to make the latter universal. The drink menace in our cities must now be reckoned with if we are to save our so-called educated and moneyed classes from becoming addicts to this evil.

It interested me greatly to note in both the U. K. and Switzerland the great attention that is paid to priorities in housing and medical aid and relief to mothers and children. Throughout the war and even today children are not denied their full quota of milk, nor are pregnant women. All others are catered for after the needs of the first two categories have been fulfilled. The new workmen's and villagers' cottages are small but neat so as to provide for the minimum needs of a family. I long for the day when our farmers and our workmen will be able to have such cottages. Medical aid and relief of the best quality is available to the poorest in the land. The new Health Act of the U. K. is a reformatory measure on sound lines. I trust we too will be able to move along those lines when we have the requisite number of doctors, nurses and hospitals. But if the medical profession here were to realize the high calling of their profession and make it nothing but a means of service to the poor there would be no need for socialization or nationalization of anything. All would *ipso facto* belong to the nation.

Switzerland was cut off from the outside world during the war years and had to rely a great deal on its own resources for food. It is a small country, richly endowed by nature in beauty, wonderful rivers, lakes and mountains, rich pasture land and a hardy people. They doubled their output of cereals and are still maintaining it. Today there is no shortage of food in this lovely land but people have not given up their war efforts. Land brought under cultivation is still cultivated for growing cereals and the people have increased their intake of raw vegetables and fruit. It is a tragedy that our 'Grow More Food' campaign has been such a failure. They had their hundredth Independence Day celebrations on August 1st which we were able to see in their picturesque capital of Berne. There are 25 Cantons (small provinces) in Switzerland. Groups from all of them joined in the big procession, dressed in their colourful peasant and other costumes of a century ago. One banner which they carried impressed us all greatly. "Four languages (Italian, French, German and Romansch), one voice; four languages, one people." We could learn a great deal from these folk too. I gathered that every child learns three languages from the beginning, French, German, and Italian. These three are all used in their Parliament. A great many learn English later on in life. And yet we here find it difficult to learn our provincial language and Hindustani in the primary stages and English in our higher education. 'Where there is a will there is a way' is true for all time and for all occasions. If only we could have peace within and on our borders there is so much that we can do to lighten the burden of the poor man. Everything is linked up with everything else. We cannot have education without health and vice versa. There can be no health without food and good housing, drainage and a pure water supply. And we cannot reach out to our village population in the matter of education or medical aid without communications. Above all there can be no progress without honesty. Standards of integrity deteriorate when there is violence abroad. Truth cannot be without non-violence as Gandhiji always taught us. Therefore, unless we set and demand high standards of integrity, we shall surely fall.

New Delhi, 19-9-'48 A. K.

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BEATING ABOUT THE BUSH

In the course of an article to the Press on Currency and Control, Shri J. C. Kumarappa writes:

"The resultant action taken by the government to re-introduce controls shows that the government is oblivious of the lessons our past experience had to teach. With the lack of character, which is obvious in both the seller and the consumer, to introduce controls will be to repeat the past. The essential factors in control should be the administrative machinery and the sense of citizenship of the merchant. When these are absent, as it has abundantly been proved, to bring in controls will be like handing over a flaming torch to a little child who is playing in a room full of wooden furniture and cloth upholstery. The use of the torch needs certain discipline and self-control which can hardly be expected from a child, and it is folly to place instruments of destruction in hands which cannot be trusted."

Observations

Then after a brief review of the report published by the Government of India on this matter, Shri Kumarappa says:

"Many state that there is a scarcity of consumer goods, but they forget that this is an all-world malady to which we are no exception. The improvement of the situation lies in producing consumer goods by methods which will bring in quick results. At the present time capital goods are not available, and therefore, even as a matter of exigency, we have to turn to cottage industries. Unfortunately a great many of those in charge cannot think in terms of organizations other than the mammoth ones. If, as a measure of dealing with inflation, light dawned on powers that be, and village and cottage industries are harnessed to meet this need, it will be a boon to the masses of the people in our country.

"Some of the advisers counsel dropping of the prohibition scheme. This shows what values people place on building up a society. We cannot afford to ignore social values. In an emergency the need for it is all the greater. We can afford to do without great many things, but we cannot afford to send some of our fellow beings into the gutters under the plea of monetary needs. Nation-building activities should be safeguarded from the financial enthusiasts.

"We are surprised that even a leading labour leader should make the misstatement that at the present time "the rural indebtedness has been practically wiped out releasing additional purchasing power to the rural population." The labour leader forgets that whatever the increased agricultural prices may have meant to the few surplus producers, it has not brought relief to the bulk of the agriculturists in the deficit economy. Though the agricultural prices had gone up that of the manufactured articles also had risen and therefore the apparent advantage had proved to be more than a handicap.

"The Financial Adviser, Dr. P. J. Thomas, while strongly recommending retrenchment in the government staff, curiously enough, equally strongly recommends an expansion of his own department! This appears to be the way most of the counsellors have been working. The industrialists take this opportunity to ask for safeguarding them with labour legislation. They want to introduce third shifts, they plead for supplies of coal and raw materials. They expect to get special depreciation allowances and relief from income-tax! They wish, the government will not make any statements to shake the confidence of the industrialists and want the government to re-enunciate their industrial policy! Thus all the counsellors seem to have gone to the government to plead their own case. The government itself seems to be obsessed with what Shri Jaiprakash Narayan calls the Tennessee Valley Authority mentality, and are not willing to let go their grip of power which makes them jealous to expand their departments and incur expenditures without counting the cost.

Suggestions

"As we have already indicated, development of character and discipline is the first prerequisite. In this the government itself should set the example and turning the searchlight inwards should set its own house in order. Princely salaries to members of government, ministers of provinces and other high dignitaries should all be scaled down ruthlessly to be in consonance with the economic status of the common half-starved citizen. Unless it does this, it will have no grounds to ask others to help in its effort of setting up the economic structure of the country on a sound basis. The moral appeal given by an example is much greater than all the preaching from the house-tops. In regard to currency, the suggestions made of withdrawing the money in circulation by issuing Government paper, unless such funds were made available or ear-marked for specific purposes, such as agricultural development, will be a danger if left in the hands of what has proved to be a spendthrift government. Here we may mention that notes in circulation have gone up several crores in the last few months. If our expenses are to be met by the printing press, no attempts at deflation will ever succeed. The sooner we bring the improvident government to base its currency on valuable securities, such as gold and silver bullion the better it will be for the country. It will increase the credit-worthiness of the government.

"As regards production, as we have repeatedly stated, we agree that village and cottage industries should be stepped up and agriculture should be made to produce all that we need in the form of prime necessities. Foreign trade should be restricted to surpluses only and the use of money should be confined to exchange of commodities to comparatively

distant places, while local exchange should take place as far as possible through multi-purpose co-operative societies on the basis of barter. Agricultural prices themselves should be fixed not as a derivative from manufactured articles and indices worked up by a consideration of such prices, but they should be calculated independently on the basis of effort and energy put into the production of such commodities. Unless this is done, the old slogan that agriculture does not pay will assert itself.

"Until our economic structure is firmly based on the activity of the common man in producing the needs of the general public, we shall always be in an unstable equilibrium like a cone balanced on its apex. It is time that the government took stock not only of the financial morass in which it finds itself, but the greater mess in which the country has been led by lack of a well-defined and well-thought out economic policy."

THE SAVIOUR OF HARIJANS

It is sometimes asked what Gandhiji did for the Harijans. There were critics who maintained that under the sweet name of Harijan, he really wanted to subdue them and that the Harijan Sevak Sangh was only an instrument to turn them into his henchmen. I do not wish in the least to probe into the intentions of these critics. I would only say that this criticism is simply a travesty of truth. The Harijan population in this country is well over six crores. They are scattered all over the country. They live all their life in poverty, squalor and ignorance, groaning under the weight of untouchability. For thousands of years, they have been rotting in this slavery and if anybody stretched his hand of help to these down-trodden people, I would unhesitatingly say, with my conscience clear, it was Gandhiji and none else! Great saints like Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram raised their voice against this social injustice, but they were not heard. Brilliant men like Dr. Ambedkar tried to pierce through this knotty problem with their extraordinary talents, but their attempts also fell short. But Gandhiji with his persuasive speech, powerful pen and untiring efforts successfully solved this age-old problem.

BLOT ON HINDUISM

Untouchability is a blot on the Hindu religion and it must be wiped out. Those who observe untouchability do not promote but destroy their religion. Harijans embraced other faiths not because they believed in them, but because of the torture they were subjected to in the Hindu fold. If Hindu religion is to survive and this leakage stopped, then you must treat the Harijans with equality, tolerance and love. Without that, there is no deliverance. It was Gandhiji who brought this truth home to us. He gave a rude shock to the old orthodox ideology when he advised caste Hindus to serve the Harijans in order to atone for the sins they perpetrated through centuries together. It awakened the thoughtful people from their long slumber. He literally brought about a revolution in the field of thought by preaching that all human beings are equal, all children of God before whom there is no difference of high and low. Man is high or low, not by birth or by the work he is called upon to do, but by his own actions — this is the core of his teachings and in order to demonstrate it in practice, he himself many times did the work of a *bhangi* and even lived in the *Bhangi* Colony. It is due to the influence of his teachings that today all over India the Harijans are shouldering the burden of administration of the country equally with others.

With a view to spreading education among the Harijans, Mahatmaji opened *ashrams* and hostels at various places and organized the Harijan Sevak Sangh. If the darkness in the form of ignorance in which the Harijans have been groping for centuries is once removed, they will have a proper perspective of the environments surrounding them. They will be conscious of their rights as human beings, and will fight for them. They will be alive to the need of becoming free citizens of the world by breaking through the bondage of Hindu orthodoxy. With this end in view, Gandhiji kept the flame of knowledge constantly burning in the hearts of the Harijans.

The Harijans are an indivisible part of the Hindus. They cannot be separated from the rest of the Hindus socially, economically or politically. Gandhiji staked his life against the Communal Award in 1932 when he was in the Yeravda Jail, so that this idea may prevail and he came out successful through that ordeal. But he did not rest after he won this political victory. In order to change the mind of the people, in 1934 he toured all parts of the country, delivered thousands of speeches and wrote many articles. He persuaded the caste Hindus to treat the Harijans as their own kith and kin. Since the word, "untouchable" evokes unpleasant associations, he substituted it by the sweet word 'Harijan'. He started his own paper under the name of *Harijan*. As this work required considerable money, he himself begged for it and thus raised the Harijan Fund. He had no objection even to resorting to legislation if that could help to wipe out this blot on society. His whole being revolted against this demon of untouchability.

(*From the broadcast speech of Shri G. D. Tapase, Minister for Backward Classes, Bombay, on 2-10-'48*)

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